REMARKS

The indicated allowability of claims 28 and 29 is gratefully acknowledged. However, as explained below, it is submitted that all claims are in condition for allowance and the Examiner's reconsideration in that regard is requested.

The Examiner still rejects claim 20 and most of the dependent claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Jain (US 6,765,914) in view of Walker (US 6,701,375).

In the 'Response to Arguments' section of the Final Office Action, the Examiner states that Applicants' previous arguments were not persuasive, in particular because Applicants have argued that the subnets of Jain are all allocated to one VLAN and therefore do not read upon the connection based on the VLAN ID.

With respect, Applicants' previous arguments did not contain such a statement. On the contrary, the Applicants agree with the Examiner on the fact that each subnet of Jain is assigned a VLAN ID (and the passage col.4, lines 48-52 of Jain was even identified in Applicants' previous response).

However, the point is that the mapping of each subnet, comprising switch-host interfaces, to a respective VLAN is a manual configuration step. It only results from the choice of a provider to assign a particular VLAN ID value to a given subnet.

This is in contrast with the subject-matter of claim 20, which recites receiving at least one tagged frame from a CE device at each CE interface allocated to said VPN, and learning a correspondence between said CE interface and each VLAN identifier included in said at least one tagged frame. Here, the VLAN identifier exists before being put in correspondence with a CE interface, as it is included in a tagged frame sent by a CE device, which will be used to learn the correspondence.

In Jain, before the configuration step, no VLAN ID is included in any frame that may be received from a host (because such VLAN ID is not yet allocated to the corresponding subnet). Consequently, no correspondence between each host-switch interface and a VLAN ID can be automatically learned depending on a VLAN ID that would be received at a switch from a host.

This basically points out the difference between a manual configuration (in Jain) and an automatic learning (in the present invention).

Walker, which was deeply analyzed in Applicants' previous response, also does not teach receiving at least one tagged frame from a CE device at each CE interface allocated to said VPN, and learning a correspondence between said CE interface and each VLAN identifier included in said at least one tagged frame.
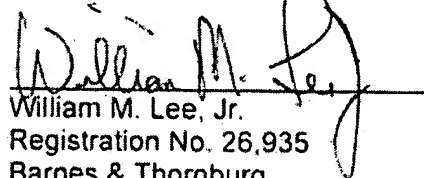
For this reason alone (there are also some other reasons which had been detailed in Applicants' previous response), one skilled in the art would not be led to the subject-matter of claim 20 of the present application even when combining the teaching of Walker with that of Jain.

The subject-matter of Claim 20 is thus new and non-obvious over Jain in view of Walker. The same applies to Claim 49 for the same reasons. Claims 21-33 and 50-58 are submitted to be allowable, as well, in particular since they depend on Claim 20 or 49 directly or indirectly.

Therefore, given the above, it is submitted that all claims are in condition for allowance, and the Examiner's further and favorable reconsideration in that regard is urged.

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